



by Ken O. Eldib

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Society for the Rational Study of Religion
(SRSR)



Welcome to SRSR where you're invited to check your coat at the door, not your brain. I'm not trying to be a wise guy, just suggesting that people think seriously about the questions that have intrigued and perplexed people since the beginning of time.

The "rational study of religion" isn't really an oxymoron... but it's does contend with the notion that, "you can't win an emotional debate with a logical argument"... Ed Rollins? The rational study of religion doesn't mean lack of faith any more than the irrational study of religion indicates its presence... but try suggesting that to people!

“... Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”...Matthew 18:3. Does this mean we should always be childlike regarding religion and faith? SRSR believes there may be times to be childlike but even in God related matters there's nothing wrong with acting like adults. In fact in 1 Corinthians 13:11 Paul says, "When I was a

child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me." So are we to "become like children" or "never enter the kingdom of heaven", or are we to "put childish ways behind." If you say I'm taking these out of context and they have no connection, I can only say I respectfully disagree and repeat that there is nothing wrong with acting like adults.

Faith is wonderful but blind faith is something else and misguided faith can be the prelude to things like Jonestown Kool-Aid. There's nothing wrong with subjecting religious "truths" to a little scrutiny and if valid they should stand up to it just fine. SRSR was conceived with the premise that people with inquiring minds, have the right and responsibility to approach religion and spirituality with their eyes, ears and minds wide open!



SRSR's promotes the study, seeking and discussion of: God, spirituality and the eternal questions... where did we come from, why are we here and where are we going? Is that a bunch of BS? I don't think so.

"Here's a truck stop instead of St. Peters"...REM

They rushed to get there, sat in the cinder block sanctuary and listened to the pastor preach over the PA. Outside snow-capped the trees and God didn't need a loud speaker smile smile emoticon



Bible, Canon and Lost books

For our purposes the lost books of the Bible include the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Gnostic Gospels and the various Apocryphal Writings. There are various and at times contradictory lists of Lost or forbidden books of the Bible consisting primarily of books that were not "Canonized" by the early church.

The reason these books were not canonized varies according to who you ask, but some say the various "lost books" were rejected because they were considered; spurious (false), of questionable authority and in some cases heretical. On the other hand, the Bibles canonized books are considered by the churches to have been divinely inspired.

Dead Sea Scrolls

In the winter of 1946–47, a Bedouin tribesman name Muhammed edh-Dhib and his cousin discovered the first of the caves containing the Dead Sea Scrolls and a total of 11 caves were found by 1956.

There are 972 Dead Sea Scroll "documents" dating from about 150BC to 70 AD, including texts from the Hebrew Bible and other ancient manuscripts that are usually associated with an ancient Jewish sect called the Essenes. Scholars believe some of them were written by other Jewish groups such as priests in Jerusalem and Zadokites.

The Copper Scroll

Reputed to be a treasure map, the original fragments are visible below, while a modern replica is in the framed case.

312 AD, Constantine alleges that Jesus said to him "in my name go forth and conquer", there may be competing variations such as in the sign of the cross go forth and conquer.

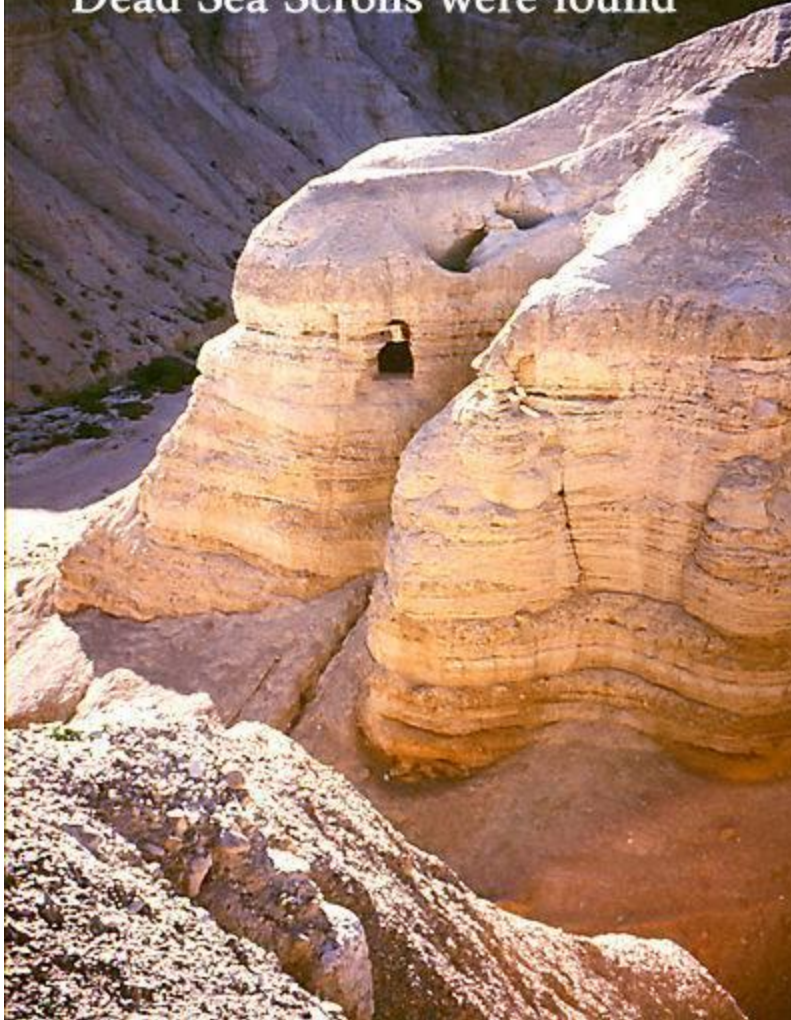
Eusebius' made a list of accepted, disputed and heretical books of Christianity

Constantine commissioned Eusebius to compile an official Bible.

Constantine/Eusebius' Bible had 18? Books and may have been lost to history?

Marcion of Sniop

Qumran Caves where
Dead Sea Scrolls were found



MISCELLANEOUS FOR SALE

***"The Four
Dead Sea Scrolls"***

Biblical Manuscripts dating back to at least 200 BC, are for sale. This would be an ideal gift to an educational or religious institution by an individual or group.

Box F 206, The Wall Street Journal.



The Psalms Scroll

10. דהיינו בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו
11. 11:1-12:1 בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו
12. 12:1-13:1 בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו
13. 13:1-14:1 בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו
14. 14:1-15:1 בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו
15. 15:1-16:1 בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו
16. 16:1-17:1 בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו
17. 17:1-18:1 בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו
18. 18:1-19:1 בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו

1. בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו
2. בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו
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9. בזהו ענינו לראש מדרגתו

PSALMS
TITULUS



The Copper Scroll



The walls of Jericho

PARALLELS BETWEEN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS IN THE BIBLE AND OTHER ANCIENT TEXTS

The source for the section below is:

OLD TESTAMENT PARALLELS

BY VICTOR H. MATTHEWS AND DON C. BENJAMIN

COPYRIGHT 1991 PAULIST PRESS; NEW YORK/MAHWAH, NJ

CALL NUMBER 221.95 (check for it at your library)

PAGES 179-198

This book tell's about two ancient writers of wise sayings, name Ahiqar and Amen-em-o-pe, whose writing, though earlier than the Bible, are very similar to the Bible's Book of Proverbs:

Ahiqar was an advisor to Sennacherib, who was king of Assyria from 704-681 BCE. In 1906 German archaeologists recovered an edition of his memoirs and teachings on the island of Elephantine which is today part of the city of Aswan in southern Egypt. (Elephantine was the location of an expatriot community of Jews according to other things I've read, one source said these Hebrews were mercenaries working for the Egyptians to keep the Ethiopians from invading, another source said the arc of the covenant was hidden at Elephantine. Is it conceivable that the edition of Ahiqar's writings were used by the Hebrews to write their own books?

Here are the examples of some of the similar passages:

"If a man curses his father or mother, his lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness" Prov.20:20

compare with:

"Those who do not honor their parents, are cursed by the Gods for their evil", Ahiqar 9:137

"He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him; Prov. 13:24

compare with:

"Spare the rod, spoil the child", Ahiqar 6:81

"Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone" Prov. 25:15

compare with:

"Gentle is the tongue of a king, but it can break a dragon's bone", Ahiqar 7:105

Amen-em-ope taught in Egypt between 1200 - 1000 BCE .

Shortly after 1900 archaeologists found the papyrus with these writings, it is now in the British museum in London (# 10474). Another version is on a clay tablet in Turin, Italy.

"Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips.: prov. 17-18 compare with:

"Listen to what I say, Learn my words by heart. Prosperity comes to those who keep my words in their hearts.

Poverty comes to those who discard them! Enshrine my words in your souls, Lock them away in your hearts"

Amen-em-ope 3:10

"Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court" Prov. 22:22

compare with:

"Do not steal from the poor, Nor cheat the cripple",

Amen-em-ope 2:1

"If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head and the Lord will reward you", Prov. 25:21-22 compare with:

"Leave the punishment of the fool to The Gods; Feed them until they are full, Give them your bread until they are ashamed" Amen-em-ope 5:8

"Do not move an ancient boundary stone or encroach on the fields of the fatherless, for their Defender is strong; he will take up their case against you" Prov. 23:10-11
compare with:

"Do not relocate the surveyor's stone to steal a field, nor move the surveyor's line to take a farm. Do not covet another's land, nor poach on the widow's field. To forge a claim to the public path through a field, Cries out to Thoth God of the Moon, for justice. Amen-em-ope 7:12-15

"Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil" Prov. 15:16

"Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice" Prov. 16:8

compare with :

"Better a single bushel from God, Than five thousand stolen bushels" Amen-em-ope 8:19

"Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred" Prov. 15:17

"Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife" Prov. 17:1

compare with:

"Better is a single loaf and a happy heart, Than all the riches of the world and sorrow" Amen-em-ope 9:9

**"Better is bread eaten with a contented heart, Than wealth
spent with sorrow..." Amen-em-ope 16: 14**

**"Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they
will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle"
Prov. 23:5**

compare with:

**"At night, stolen goods dig a hole into the underworld, They
fly away like geese into the sky" Amen-em-ope 10:3**

**"Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not
associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his
ways and get yourself ensnared", Prov. 22:24-25**

compare with:

**"Do not rush to embrace fools, Lest their advice drown you
like a storm" Amen-em-ope 13:8**

**"You will vomit up the little you have eaten and will have
wasted your compliments" Prov. 23:8**

compare with:

**"When you vomit a piece of bread too large to swallow,
What you gained is lost..." Amen-em-ope 14:13**

**"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a
day may bring forth" Prov. 27:1**

compare with:

**"Do not go to bed worrying, Wondering: "What will tomorrow
bring?" "No one knows what tomorrow brings"**

Amen-eo-ope 19:11

"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's

purpose that prevails" Prov. 19:21

"In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines

his steps" Prov. 16:9

compare with:

"Human words are one thing, Divine actions are another"

Amen-em-ope 19:15

"Have I not written thirty sayings for you, sayings of

counsel and knowledge" Prov. 22:20

compare with:

"To study these thirty chapters, Is to be educated and

entertained!" Amen-em-ope 30:1

The Founding Father's Faiths

We are often told that America is a country founded on Christian or Judeo-Christian values and SRSR agrees with that but would add that then as now, there is a difference between believing in Christian values and in being a Christian. The founding fathers were a group of complete individuals and their religious beliefs were quite varied.

George Washington was a Christian, a theist and a Mason. The last two descriptors, are not very popular with today's TV evangelists, some of whom would have us believe that George believed exactly what they do.

Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and other founding fathers, were even more radical in their beliefs and possibly can best be described as "secular humanists" a term despised by many TV preachers.

John Adams was a member of the Unitarian church, which is not thought very highly of by fundamentalists, for it's belief that it's members should, "follow the dictates of their own conscience." SRSR agrees that our consciences are not very reliable, but other people's consciences aren't either so don't let them be yours.

Thomas Jefferson "was intensely interested in theology, biblical study, and morality. He is most closely connected with the Episcopal Church, Unitarianism, and the religious philosophy of Deism. He wrote to a nephew, "Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blind-folded fear." [76][77] In private letters, Jefferson refers to himself as "Christian" (1803), [78][79] "a sect by myself" (1819), [80] an "Epicurean" (1819), [81] a "Materialist" (1820), [82] and a "Unitarian by myself" (1825). [83]" (The above paragraph is from Wikipedia.org on Nov. 2, 2010.)

Thomas Jefferson who is credited with much of the authorship of the Declaration of Independence and some of the Constitution (SRSR thinks George Mason and others deserve more credit than they receive), had his own very strong religious convictions.

Jefferson wrote his own version of the New Testament, where he tried to include only the passages that he considered to have actually come from Jesus. Reportedly he began it while President and completed it after his retirement. The book was published after his death as the The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth: The Jefferson Bible, and it is widely available on Amazon.com.

Jefferson explained why he wrote this book in a letter to John Adams dated January 24, 1814, a portion of the letter appears below:

"The whole history of these books (the gospels) is so defective and doubtful that it seems vain to attempt minute enquiry into it: and such tricks have been played with their text, and with the texts of other books relating to them, that we have a right, from the cause, to entertain much doubt what parts of them are genuine. In the New Testament there is internal evidence that parts of it have proceeded from an extraordinary man; and that other parts are the fabric of very inferior minds. It is easy to separate those parts, as to pick diamonds from dunghills."

Abraham Lincoln's religious beliefs are also controversial and it is easy to find quotes from him, his wife and others who knew him supporting just about any conclusion one wants to reach regarding his faith.

U.S. Grant wrote in his memoirs, about the importance of the freedom to "follow the dictates of one's own conscience", when it comes to religion.

Below are a few quotes that SRSR believes supports the idea that the founding fathers were not monolithically Christian, but I believe they were probably greatly influenced by Christianity... not to mention Free Masonry, Deism as well as other religious and secular traditions.

First Treaty of Tripoli (during the term of President George Washington) states in part:

"As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility, of Mussulmen; and, as the said States never entered into any war, or act of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it is declared by the parties, that no pretext arising from religious opinions, shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries."[3]

The above treaty was ratified by all 23 of the 32 sitting Senators who were present for the June 7, 1796 vote [16]

"I have generally been dominated a Deist, the reality of which I never disputed, being conscious I am no Christian, except mere infant baptism makes me one; and as to being a Deist, I know not strictly speaking, whether I am one or not." - Ethan Allen

"In those parts of the world where learning and science has prevailed, miracles ceased; but in those parts that are barbarous and ignorant, miracles are still in vogue." - Ethan Allen to Thomas Jefferson

"I wish it (Christianity) were more productive of good works ... not holy day keeping, sermon hearing ... of making long prayers, filled with flatteries and compliments despised by wise men, and much less capable of pleasing Deity." - Benjamin Franklin

"As to Jesus of Nazareth, my Opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the System of Morals and his Religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupt changes, and I have, with most of the present Dissenters in England, some Doubts as to his divinity; tho' it is a question I do not dogmatize upon..." - Benjamin Franklin

"On the dogmas of religion, as distinguished from moral principles, all mankind, from the beginning of the world to this day, have been quarreling, fighting, burning and torturing one another, for abstractions unintelligible to themselves and to all others, and absolutely beyond the comprehension of the human mind." - Thomas Jefferson

"Whence arose all the horrid assassinations of whole nations of men, women, and infants, with which the Bible is filled; and the bloody persecutions, and tortures unto death, and religious wars, that since that time have laid Europe in blood and ashes; whence arose they, but from the impious thing called religion. and this monstrous belief that God has spoken to man?" - Thomas Paine

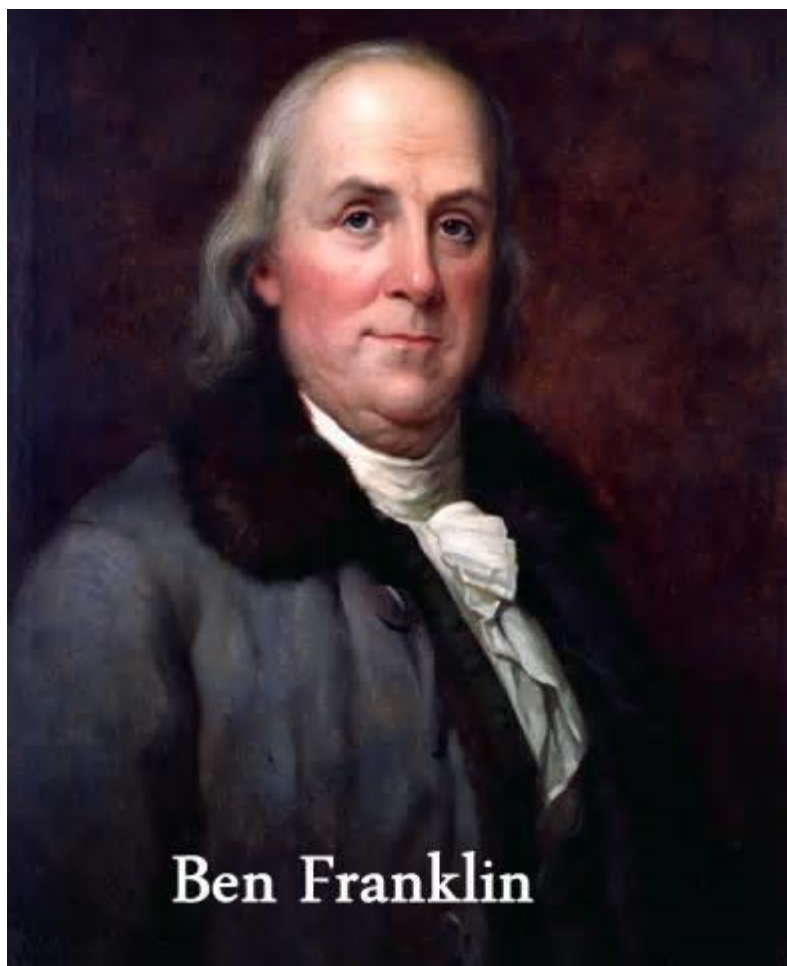
"I do not believe in the creed professed by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church." - Thomas Paine

"All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit." - - Thomas Paine

"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ!" - Patrick Henry (this quote is widely disputed)

"It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible." - George Washington (this quote is widely disputed)





**Thomas Jefferson, wrote his own
version of the New Testament...**



Going to Hell?

Valley of Gehenna

The Valley of Gehenna as it looks today.

Valley of Gehenna (One Hell?)

Going to hell has been quite a fear for thousands of years and it has been a major reason that people have unflinchingly followed their religions teachings.

What is hell and where does the word come from. According to many academic sources, there are several words that were in original Biblical texts written separately, but were all translated in the King James version as hell. The words are hades, tartaros and gehenna and all of them have different meanings.

To complicate matters more, there is also the Hebrew word sheol which like hades, means grave or pit, which can also be mixed up in this debate, because it is used in the Old Testament in place of the word hades.

First of all "hell" is an old English word that originally meant a hole in the ground. At the time the King James version of the Bible was translated, people in England reportedly spoke of putting their potatoes in hell for the winter to keep them from rotting, it meant a hole in the ground and also may have meant a grave.

Starting with the word hades, which is used 11 times in the New Testament, we see a pattern of possible mis-translation. Hades, is a Greek word which like sheol is more accurately translated as a pit or hole in the ground where the dead are placed. Neither the word hades or the word sheol refers to a place of fire or of eternal punishment, but both are translated as hell in the King James version, which to Bible readers means the place of eternal damnation.

The word "tartaros" is translated as the word "hell" in II Peter 2:4. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (tartaroo in the original texts), and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgement..." The Greeks used this word to describe the place where Zeus confined the rebellious Titans and the Bible refers to it in II Peter 2:4 as where the angels that followed Satan were cast, but it does not refer to it as a place where humans are cast. In SRSR's opinion, tartaroos (translated as hell in King James Version) is probably meant as the place where Satan and his legions are said to be cast, not humans who have missed the mark.

A third word that has been translated as hell is "gehenna", coming from the Hebrew words Gai Hinnom, meaning "valley of Hinnom." This valley of Hinnom is a real place located south by southwest of Jerusalem. Today Gai Hinnom is reported to be a fairly nice place, with at least some grass and flowers growing there. In Biblical times however it was a place where pagan rites, possibly even infant sacrifices may have occurred.

It was thus considered an unclean place by the Israelites and was used as a dump for the bodies of criminals, animals, garbage and sewage. Fires are said to have burned there continuously because of the supply of "fuel" and to reduce the foul odor. It is natural that became known as a place of evil and ruination.

SRSR believes that serious study shows that when the Bible talks about destruction in hell (gehenna) it means complete and final destruction, but not necessarily eternal or constant torture. The Bible, SRSR believes, does speak of eternal life, but not eternal punishment, instead it speaks of final and permanent destruction of the souls and bodies of the "wicked."

In Matthew 10:28 Jesus says, "fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Originally the word gehenna was used here and the word hell was used starting with the King

James version. Similarly gehenna is translated as hell in Mathew 23:33, "Ye serpents...how can ye escape the damnation of hell?", here he is talking about the Pharasees.

In Malachi 4:1-3, this prophet speaking of the Day of the Lord, says, "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up saith the Lord of hosts, that it will leave them neither root nor branch..." SRSR see's this as more evidence that the Bible may originally have meant that the "damned" will be permanently terminated, not eternally tortured and this is perhaps more in tune with a loving and just God.



Major Male Figures in Religion

Jesus who was he, what did he say, what did he teach? Far too much to cover here and now...

Paul the Apostle (Greek: Παῦλος Paulos; c. 5 – c. 67), originally known as Saul of Tarsus (Hebrew: הַתַּרְסִי שָׁאוּל; Greek: Σαῦλος Ταρσεύς Saulos Tarseus),[1][2] was an apostle (though not one of the Twelve Apostles) who taught the gospel of Christ to the first-century world.[7] He is generally considered one of the most important figures of the Apostolic Age.[8][9] In the mid-30s to the mid-50s, he founded several churches in Asia Minor and Europe. Paul used his status as both a Jew and a Roman citizen to advantage in his ministry to both Jewish and Roman audiences.

According to writings in the New Testament Paul, who was known as Saul early on, was dedicated to the persecution of the early disciples of Jesus in the area of Jerusalem.[10] In the narrative of the book of Acts, while Paul was traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus on a mission to "bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem", the resurrected Jesus appeared to him in a great light. He was struck blind, but after three days his sight was restored by Ananias of Damascus, and Paul began to preach that Jesus of Nazareth is the Jewish Messiah and the Son of God.[11] Approximately half of the book of Acts deals with Paul's life and works.

Fourteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament have traditionally been attributed to Paul.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle

Messiahs who didn't make the cut

Judas of Galilee or Judas of Gamala led a violent resistance to the census imposed for Roman tax purposes by Quirinius in Iudaea Province around AD 6. The revolt was crushed brutally by the Romans. These events are discussed by Josephus in Jewish Wars and in Antiquities of the Jews. Judas is mentioned in the New Testament Book of Acts of the Apostles. The author has Gamaliel, a member of the Sanhedrin, refer to him as an example of a failed Messianic leader. This is evidently an error, since it describes the revolt of Theudas, which would not actually take place for another ten years, as happening before that of Judas, see also Historical reliability of the Acts of the Apostles. source:wikipedia

Simon of Peraea or Simon son of Joseph was a former slave of Herod the Great who rebelled and was killed by the Romans in 4 BC. He has been identified as the messiah of Gabriel's Revelation. He is mentioned by Flavius Josephus source:wikipedia According to some he was a prototype for a dying and resurrected messiah and may have inspired Jesus. He may have been treated as a hero and star but was renamed the liar after his defeat?

Joseph of Arimathea was, according to the Gospels, the man who donated his own prepared tomb for the burial of Jesus after Jesus' Crucifixion. He is mentioned in all four Gospels. Was he Jesus' great uncle and did he take Jesus the boy to England and India?

Constantine the Great

Full name Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus born Born 27 February ca. 272 Birthplace Naissus, Illyria (modern-day Niš, Serbia) Died 22 May 337 (337-05-22) (aged 65)

Constantine I, Constantine the Great, or Saint Constantine, was Roman Emperor from 306 to 337. Best known for being the first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine reversed the persecutions of his predecessor, Diocletian, and issued the Edict of Milan in 313, which proclaimed religious tolerance of Christians throughout the empire.

Constantine is perhaps best known for being the first Christian Roman emperor; his reign was certainly a turning point for the Church. In February 313, Constantine met with Licinius in Milan where they developed the Edict of Milan. The edict stated that Christians should be allowed to follow the faith of their choosing.

Scholars debate whether Constantine adopted his mother St. Helena's Christianity in his youth, or whether he adopted it gradually over the course of his life. Constantine would retain the title of pontifex maximus until his death, a title emperors bore as heads of the pagan priesthood, as would his Christian successors on to Gratian (r. 375–83). According to Christian writers, Constantine was over 40 when he finally declared himself a Christian, writing to Christians to make clear that he believed he owed his successes to the protection of the Christian High God alone. Throughout his rule, Constantine supported the Church financially, built basilicas, granted privileges to clergy (e.g. exemption from certain taxes), promoted Christians to high office, and returned property confiscated during the Diocletianic persecution. His most famous building projects include the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and Old Saint Peter's Basilica.

Constantine did not patronize Christianity alone, however. After gaining victory in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, a triumphal arch—the Arch of Constantine—was built to celebrate; the arch is decorated with images of Victoria and sacrifices to gods like Apollo, Diana, or Hercules, but contains no Christian symbolism. In 321, Constantine instructed that Christians and non-Christians should be united in observing the "venerable day of the sun", referencing the esoteric eastern sun-worship which Aurelian had helped introduce, and his coinage still carried the symbols of the sun-cult until 324. Even after the pagan gods had disappeared from the coinage, Christian symbols appear only as Constantine's personal attributes: the chi rho between his hands or on his labarum, but never on the coin itself. Even when Constantine dedicated the new capital of Constantinople, which became the seat of Byzantine Christianity for a millennium, he did so wearing the Apollonian sun-rayed Diadem.

The First Council of Nicaea was a council of Christian bishops convened in Nicaea in Bithynia (present-day İznik in Turkey) by the Roman Emperor Constantine I in A.D. 325. The Council was the first effort to attain consensus in the church through an assembly representing all of Christendom.

Source: Wikipedia

After his historic battle against Maxentius, Constantine reportedly delayed his baptism until after he had executed his defeated enemies, because he reportedly didn't think a Christian emperor should execute people.

According to one source, Constantine may have been as devoted to worship of Apollo the Sun god who is on his victory arch, Mithraism and Thrygan priesthood. Mithraism was "a religious cult that worshiped Mithras, especially popular among the Roman military and a strong rival to Christianity during the late Roman Empire." www.answers.com. The same source mentions that by calling himself "Flavius", Constantine was associating himself with the Flavian dynasty, which was a major persecutor of Christians. Others speculate that Constantine wanted to attract as many powerful allies as possible and combine the old Roman pagan religion with the new Christian religion as much as possible. Constantine may have been traditional, religious or just pragmatic.

Josephus

Josephus (37 – c.100 AD/CE), also Yoseph Ben Mattithyahu in Biblical Hebrew (Joseph son of Matthias) and Titus Flavius Josephus[3] was a 1st-century Romano-Jewish historian and hagiographer of priestly and royal ancestry who recorded 1st century Jewish history, such as the First Jewish–Roman War which resulted in the Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. He has been credited by many as recording some of the earliest history of Jesus Christ outside of the gospels,[citation needed] this being an item of contention among historians.

Josephus was a law-observant Jew who believed in the compatibility of Judaism and Graeco-Roman thought, commonly referred to as Hellenistic Judaism. His most important works were *The Jewish War* (c. 75 AD/CE) and *Antiquities of the Jews* (c. 94 AD/CE).

Josephus writes of a Jewish sect, whose leader was James the Just, the brother of Jesus.[5] Josephus' history includes sections on John the Baptist, the High Priest Annas, Pontius Pilate, and Jesus called the Messiah.

There is broad scholarly consensus that the two passages referring respectively to John the Baptist, and to James the brother of Jesus are genuine. A third passage, the famous *Testimonium Flavianum* found in the *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.63-64, in its current form summarises the ministry and death of Jesus; but the authenticity of this passage remains contested by many scholars, and has been the topic of ongoing debate since the 17th century. The most widely held current scholarly opinion is that the *Testimonium Flavianum* is partially authentic; but that those words and phrases that correspond with standard Christian formulae are additions from a Christian copyist. Source: Wikipedia

Ishmael

Ishmael (Hebrew: יִשְׁמָעֵאל, Modern Yishma'el Tiberian Yišmā'ēl; Greek: Ἰσμαήλ Ismaēl; Latin: Ismael; Arabic: إِسْمَاعِيل, 'Ismā'īl) is a biblical person first mentioned in the Book of Genesis and later referenced in the Qur'an. According to Genesis, Ishmael was Abraham's first born son, whom he had through his second wife, Hagar. Although born of Hagar, according to Mesopotamian law, Ishmael was credited as Sarah's son becoming a legal heir through marriage. (Genesis 16:2-3)[1] Ishmael grew up as a slave class citizen in Abraham's settlement and became a free man at the age

of 14. Both Ishmael and his mother lived in the Desert of Paran. In later years, he became an archer and married an Egyptian woman whom he had at least 13 children with. Ishmael lived to be 137 years old.

Contents [hide] 1 Etymology 2 Ishmael in Genesis 2.1 Birth of Ishmael 2.2 Inheritance rights 2.3 Descendants 3 Deuterocanonical references 4 World views 4.1 Jewish views 4.2 Islamic tradition 4.3 Christian view 4.4 Bahá'í faith 5 References 6 Bibliographic references 7 External links 8 See also

EtymologyCognates of Hebrew Yishma'el existed in various ancient Semitic cultures.[1] For example, it is known that the name was used in early Babylonian and in Minæan.[2] It is translated literally as "God has hearkened", suggesting that "a child so named was regarded as the fulfillment of a divine promise." [1]

Ishmael in Genesis The dismissal of Hagar, by Pieter Pietersz LastmanThis is the account of Ishmael from Genesis Chapters 16, 17, 21, 25

Birth of IshmaelIn Genesis 16, the birth of Ishmael was planned by the Patriarch Abraham's first wife, who at that time was known as Sarai. She and her husband Abram (Abraham), sought a way to have children in order to fulfill Yahweh's covenant that was established in Genesis 15. Since she was unable to have children herself, her idea was to offer her Egyptian handmaiden Hagar to Abram, so that they could have a child by her. Abram consented to a marital arrangement taking Hagar as his second wife when he was in his late eighty-fifth year of age. Customs of that time dictated that, although Hagar was the birth mother, any child conceived would belong to Sarai and Abram (Sarah and Abraham).[3]

The naming, the blessing, and the cursing of Ishmael occurred at the well of Beer-lahai-roi that was located in the desert region between Abram's settlement and Shur. It was here that Hagar encountered an angel of Yahweh after she had fled from Abram's camp, due to a harsh confrontation with Sarai. The angel instructed Hagar to return to the settlement and be submissive to Sarai so that she could have her child there. The blessing that this child's father was promised was that Abram's descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth. Thus, the promise would be extended to this child who would be named Ishmael. Not only was Ishmael blessed, but he was also cursed along with his descendants when the angel said that "he shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen." [Gen.16:12] When Ishmael was born, Abram was eighty-six years old. (Genesis 16:7-16)

Inheritance rightsSee also: Account of Isaac in the Hebrew Bible

Ishmael was circumcised when he was thirteen years old becoming a part of Yahweh's covenant. This occurred because his father Abram, was inaugurated as Abraham at the age of ninety-nine and then initiated into the covenant by having himself and his entire household circumcised.(Genesis 17)

A year later, Ishmael's half-brother Isaac, was born by Abraham to his first wife Sarah. One day Sarah was angered by seeing Ishmael playing or "mocking" (the Hebrew word is ambiguous[4]),[2] and she asked Abraham to expel him and his mother, saying: "Get rid of that slave woman and her

son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." [3][5] Abraham initially refused to do as Sarah asked.[2] He finally gave in to his wife's request when God told him that it was through Isaac that Abraham's offspring would "be reckoned", and that He would "make Ishmael into a nation", too, since he was a descendant of Abraham. (Genesis 21:11-13)

After much deliberation, Abraham released Ishmael and Hagar as slaves. At the age of fourteen, Ishmael became a free man along with his mother. Under Mesopotamian law, their freedom absolved them from laying claim to any inheritance that Abraham and Sarah had. Ishmael's father gave him and his mother a minimal supply of bread and water and sent them on their way to wander in the desert wilderness of Beer-sheba. The two soon ran out of water and Hagar, not wanting to witness the death of her son, set the boy some distance away from herself, and wept. "And God heard the voice of the lad" and sent his angel to tell Hagar, "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation." And God "opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water," from which she drew to save Ishmael's life and her own. "And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer." (Genesis 21:14-21)

DescendantsAfter roaming the wilderness for sometime, Ishmael and his mother settled in the Desert of Paran, where he became an expert in archery. Eventually, his mother found him a wife from the land of Egypt.[6] They had twelve sons who became twelve tribal chiefs throughout the regions from Havilah to Shur (from Assyria to the border of Egypt).[7] His children are listed as follows:[8] ...

Islamic traditions consider Ishmael to be the ancestor of Arab people,[1] excluding Arabs who are descendants of Ya'rub. Arabs who are from Ishmael-descendant tribes are occasionally referred to as "Arabized-Arabs" to highlight their ancestry. The Prophet Muhammad was of these Arabs. However, many modern Arabs also believe their tribes and houses to be of Isaac's blood line, in particular in Southern Palestine.[citation needed]

Jewish traditions are split between those who consider Ishmael the northern Arab ancestor and those, like Maimonides, who believe that the northern Arabs are descended from the sons of Keturah, whom Abraham married after Sarah's death.[13]

Jewish viewsSee also: Isaac in Jewish traditions Judaism has generally viewed Ishmael as wicked though repentant (Whereas Christianity omits any reference to repentance which is sourced in the Talmudic explanation of the Bible [14]).[1] Judaism maintains that Isaac rather than Ishmael was the true heir of Abraham.[3] The New Testament contains few references to Ishmael.

In some Rabbinic traditions Ishmael is said to have had two wives; one of them named Aisha. This name corresponds to the Muslim tradition for the name of Muhammad's wife.[1] This is understood as a metaphoric representation of the Muslim world (first Arabs and then Turks) with Ishmael.[15] The Talmud also mentions God's regret over Ishmael.[16]

The name of an important Second Century CE sage - Ishmael ben Elisha, known as "Rabbi Ishmael" (ישמעאל רבי), one of the Tannaim - indicates that the Biblical Ishmael enjoyed a positive image among Jews of the time.[citation needed]

Rabbinical commentators in the Midrash Genesis Rabbah also say that Ishmael's mother Hagar was the Pharaoh's daughter, thereby making Ishmael the grandson of the Pharaoh. This could be why Genesis 17:20 refers to Ishmael as the father of twelve mighty princes. According to Genesis 21:21, Hagar married Ishmael to an Egyptian woman, and if Rabbinical commentators are correct about Hagar being the daughter of the Pharaoh, his marriage to a woman selected by the Pharaoh's daughter could explain how and why his sons became princes.

However, according to other Jewish commentators, Ishmael's mother Hagar is identified with Keturah, the woman Abraham married after the death of Sarah, stating that Abraham sought her out after Sarah's death. It is suggested that Keturah was Hagar's personal name, and that "Hagar" was a descriptive label meaning "stranger".[17][18][19] This interpretation is discussed in the Midrash[20] and is supported by Rashi, Gur Aryeh, Keli Yakar, and Obadiah of Bertinoro. Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Itzhaki) argues that "Keturah" was a name given to Hagar because her deeds were as beautiful as incense (hence: ketores), and/or that she remained chaste from the time she was separated from Abraham—keturah [קְטוּרָה Q'turah] derives from the Aramaic word for restrained.

It is also said that Sarah was motivated by Ishmael's sexually frivolous ways because of the reference to his "making merry" (Gen. 21:9), a translation of the Hebrew word 'Mitzachek'. This was developed into a reference to idolatry, sexual immorality or even murder; some rabbinic sources claim that Sarah worried that Ishmael would negatively influence Isaac, or that he would demand Isaac's inheritance on the grounds of being the firstborn. Others take a more positive view, emphasizing Hagar's piety, noting that she was "the one who had sat by the well and besought him who is the life of the worlds, saying 'look upon my misery'".[21]

Islamic traditionSee also: Hagar in Islamic traditions

A depiction of Hagar and Ishmael in the desert by François-Joseph Navez.Ishmael (Arabic: إسماعيل Ismā'īl) is a prophet in Islam. The Qur'an considers him to be a son of Abraham.[22] His name appears twelve times in the Qur'an mostly in lists[23] with other prophets "as part of a litany of remembrances in which the pre-Islamic prophets are praised for their resolute steadfastness and obedience to God, often in the face of adversity." [24]

The Quran does not have any genealogies; the Arabs preserved their histories and genealogies by memory alone.[citation needed]

In Islamic beliefs, Abraham had prayed to God for a son (Isma in Arabic means 'to listen' i.e. answer prayer, and ell is derived from the Northwest Semitic word el, meaning God). Muslims accept the story, present in the Hebrew Bible, that Sarah asked Abraham to marry her handmaiden Hagar because she herself was barren. Through Hagar was born Ishmael. Later after Sarah gave birth to Isaac (Ishaq) tension arose between the two women. God told Abraham to listen to Sarah, who said that both Hagar and Ishmael should be taken out of their household and into the desert.

In the desert, the young Ishmael cried with the thirst. His mother searched for water, which resulted in her running seven times between two hills, before God 'heard' them (Ishmael means

"God will hear") and made spring water gush forth from the Zamzam well, so both mother and son could rejuvenate themselves. In remembrance of this event, Muslims run between the Al-Safa and Al-Marwah hills during Hajj.

Abraham and Ishmael are said to have built the foundations of the Kaaba ("They were raising the foundations of the House", Qur'an 2:127).[24] Islamic traditions hold that the Kaaba was first built by the first man, Adam. Abraham and Ishmael rebuilt the Kaaba on the old foundations.[25]

The Qur'an states that Abraham dreamed he was to sacrifice his son. The son is not named in the Qur'an (see Qur'an 37:99–113) and in early Islam, there was a controversy over the son's identity[citation needed]. However the belief that the son was Ishmael prevailed, and this view is continued to be endorsed by Muslim scholars.[26] The argument of those Muslims who believed in the Ishmael theory was that "the promise to Sarah of Isaac followed by Jacob (Qur'an 11:71–74) excluded the possibility of a sacrifice of Isaac." [26] The other party held that the son of sacrifice was Isaac since "God's perfecting his mercy on Abraham and Isaac (in Qur'an 12:6) referred to his making Abraham his friend and saving him from the burning bush and to his rescuing Isaac." [26]

According to the contextual interpretation of some early Islamic theologians (whose view prevailed later), Ishmael was the actual son that Abraham was called on to sacrifice, as opposed to Isaac.[1][26]

According to Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan, professors of Religious Studies, the circumcision of Muslims has its roots in the tradition that Ishmael was circumcised.[27]

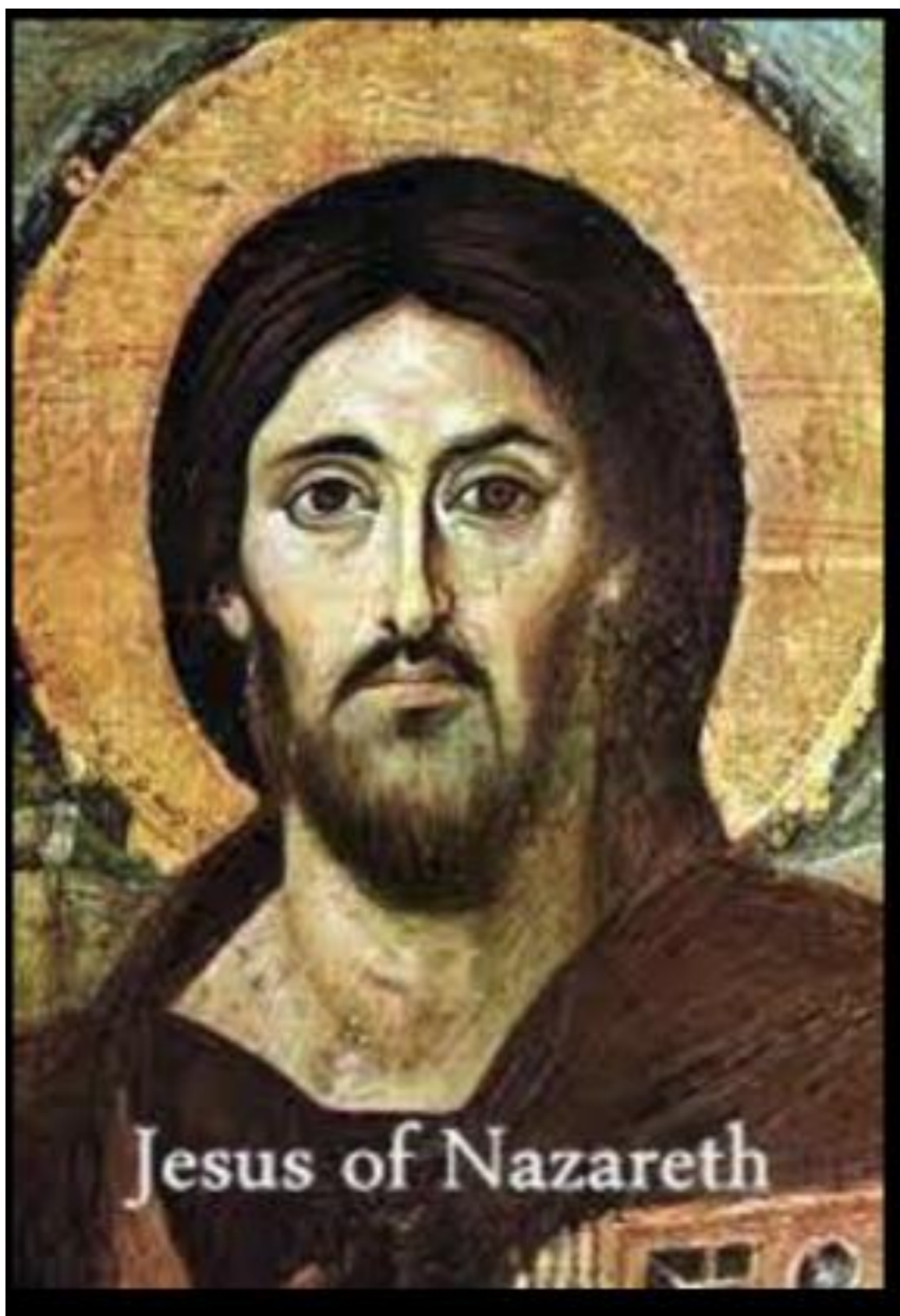
Much of the Arab world, predominantly in the Arabian region, and even Mohamed himself, claim to be direct descendants of Abram and Hagar's son Ishmael according to the genealogies of Ibn Ishak written around 770-775 A.D.

Christian viewSee also: Hagar in Christian tradition and Isaac in the New Testament In some Christian biblical interpretations, Ishmael is used to symbolize the older—now rejected—Judaic tradition; Isaac symbolizes the new tradition of Christianity.[1]

According to the Genesis account, Ishmael and his mother were expelled at the instigation of Sarah, in order to make sure that Isaac would be Abraham's heir. In the book of Galatians (4:21–31), Paul uses the incident "to symbolize the relationship between Judaism, the older but now rejected tradition, and Christianity".[1] In Galatians 4:28–31,[28] Hagar is associated with the Sinai covenant, while Sarah is associated with the covenant of grace into which her son Isaac enters.[29]

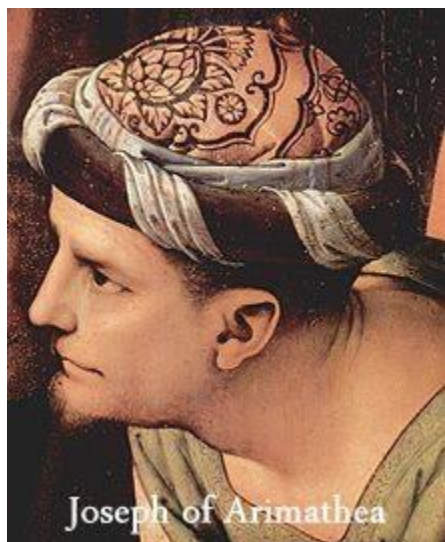
Bahá'í faithThe Bahá'í writings state that it was Ishmael, and not Isaac, who was the son that Abraham almost sacrificed.[30] However, the Bahá'í writings also state that the name is unimportant as either could be used: the importance is that both were symbols of sacrifice.[31] According to Shoghi Effendi, there has also been another Ishmael, a prophet of Israel, commonly known as Samuel.[32]

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishmael>





Apostle Paul



The emperor Constantine





Women in religion

There are many notable women in religion especially in the Bible and other Judeo Christian books. Some are heroines, others are portrayed as villains and a few are enigmatic.

The Virgin Mary

Was Mary a virgin her entire life, or did she have a normal marriage and sex life after Jesus? Was her conception of Jesus immaculate and what does that mean? Was her egg fertilized by the holy spirit and what does that mean? Could her egg have been fertilized by aliens? Could she have been raped or seduced by Panthera or someone else as Origin said? A tombstone of a Roman centurion named Panthera has been found in Germany, where the Romans once were. It says he was a

Sidonian archer who had been stationed in Palestine... this proves nothing, but it is interesting to some.

Lilith

Lilith (לילית) is a demonic character who may have first appeared in the ancient Babylonian Talmud. She later appears in other extra-Biblical writings such as the "Alphabet of Ben Sira" (circa 900 AD Jewish folklore), as Adam's first wife who God made along with Adam from the earth. In various accounts, Lilith refused to be Adam's subservient help mate, saying "Why must I lie beneath you? I also was made from dust, and am therefore your equal." In the story, Lilith leaves Adam, mating with the archangel Samael and never returns to the Garden of Eden.

There are a number of ancient stories relating to Lilith, which can be interpreted as espousing feminine strength and independence, or alternatively as the dark side of the female sex. In modern western culture, she is seen as a feminist icon lending her name to such events as the all female "Lilith Fair" concert series.

Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene (original Greek Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή),[2] or Mary of Magdala and sometimes The Magdalene, is a religious figure in Christianity. Mary Magdalene traveled with Jesus as one of his followers. She was present at Jesus' two most important moments: the crucifixion and the resurrection.[3] Within the four Gospels she is named at least 12 times,[4] more than most of the apostles. Carol Ann Morrow views the Gospel references as describing her as courageous, brave enough to stand by Jesus in his hours of suffering, death and beyond.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Magdalene

The book, The Da Vinci Code speculated that Mary Magdalene was the wife or companion of Jesus Christ and that they had a daughter who escaped after the crucifixion to France where their blood line continued. There is also a gnostic book called The Gospel of Mary Magdalene...

Asherah

Asherah was an ancient West Semitic goddess, consort of the supreme god. Her principal epithet was probably "She Who Walks on the Sea."

Inscriptions from two locations in southern Palestine seem to indicate that she was also worshiped as the consort of Yahweh.

The Book of Jeremiah written circa 628 BC possibly refers to Asherah when it uses the title "queen of heaven" (Hebrew: הַשִּׁמְיָה לַמֶּלֶכֶת) in Jer 7:18 and Jer 44:17–19, 25.[1] (For a discussion of "queen of heaven" in the Hebrew Bible, see Queen of heaven.)The word asherah in the Old Testament was used not only in reference to the goddess herself but also to a wooden cult object associated with her worship.

Stavrakopoulou bases her theory on ancient texts, amulets and figurines unearthed primarily in the ancient Canaanite coastal city called Ugarit, now modern-day Syria. All of these artifacts reveal that Asherah was a powerful fertility goddess.

Asherah's connection to Yahweh, according to Stavrakopoulou, is spelled out in both the Bible and an 8th century B.C. inscription on pottery found in the Sinai desert at a site called Kuntillet Ajrud.

"The inscription is a petition for a blessing," she shares. "Crucially, the inscription asks for a blessing from 'Yahweh and his Asherah.' Here was evidence that presented Yahweh and Asherah as a divine pair. And now a handful of similar inscriptions have since been found, all of which help to strengthen the case that the God of the Bible once had a wife."

Also significant, Stavrakopoulou believes, "is the Bible's admission that the goddess Asherah was worshiped in Yahweh's Temple in Jerusalem. In the Book of Kings, we're told that a statue of Asherah was housed in the temple and that female temple personnel wove ritual textiles for her."

J. Edward Wright, president of both The Arizona Center for Judaic Studies and The Albright Institute for Archaeological Research, told Discovery News that he agrees several Hebrew inscriptions mention "Yahweh and his Asherah."

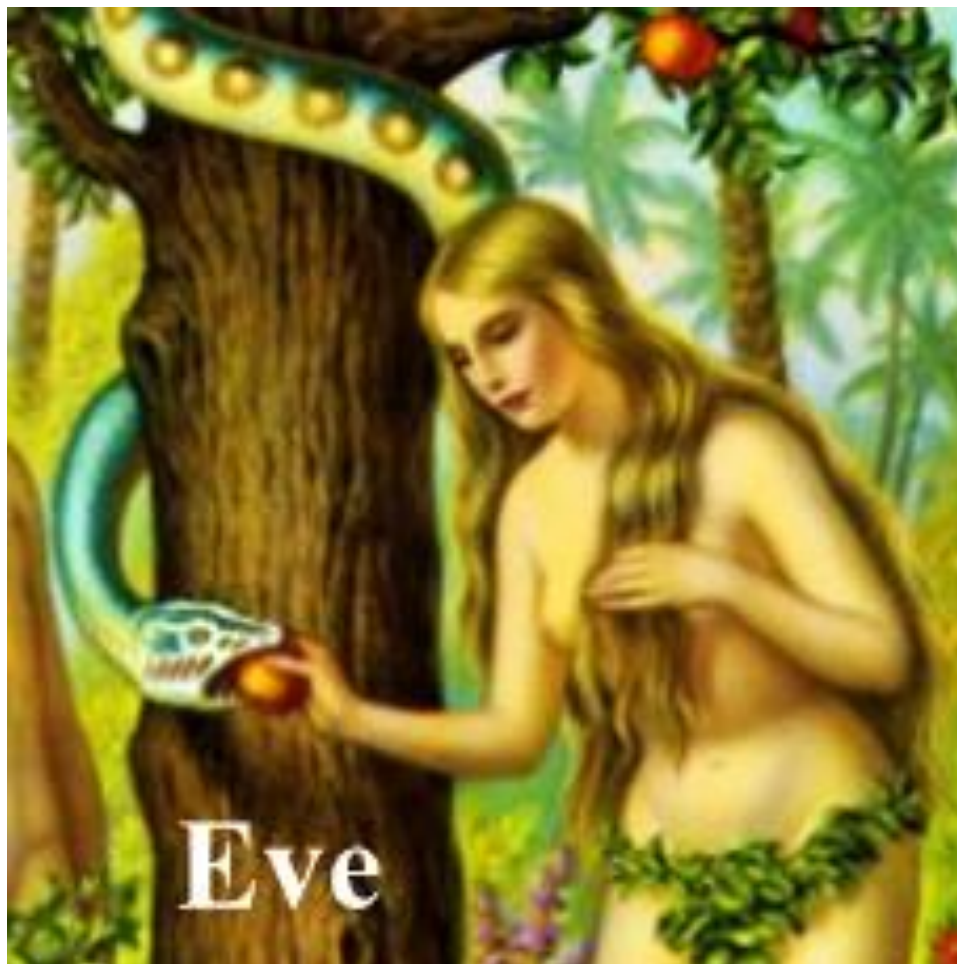
"Asherah was not entirely edited out of the Bible by its male editors," he added. "Traces of her remain, and based on those traces, archaeological evidence and references to her in texts from nations bordering Israel and Judah, we can reconstruct her role in the religions of the Southern Levant."

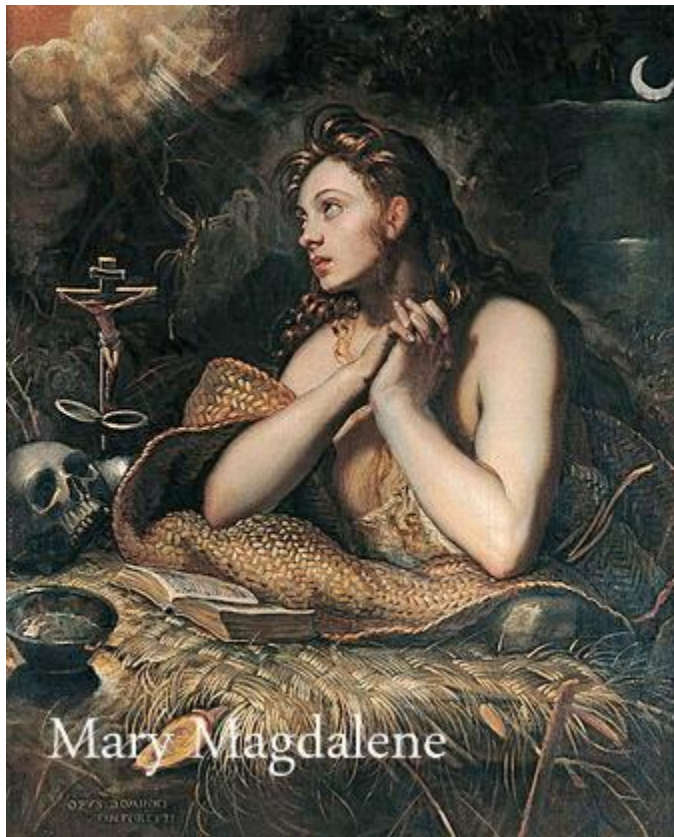
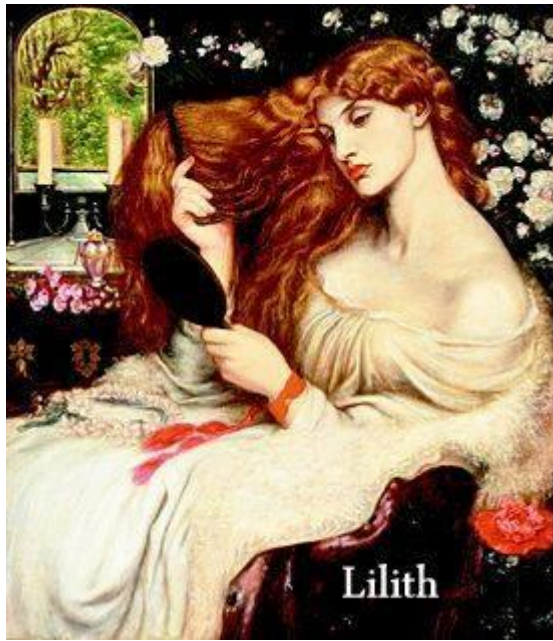
Helena (mother of Constantine)

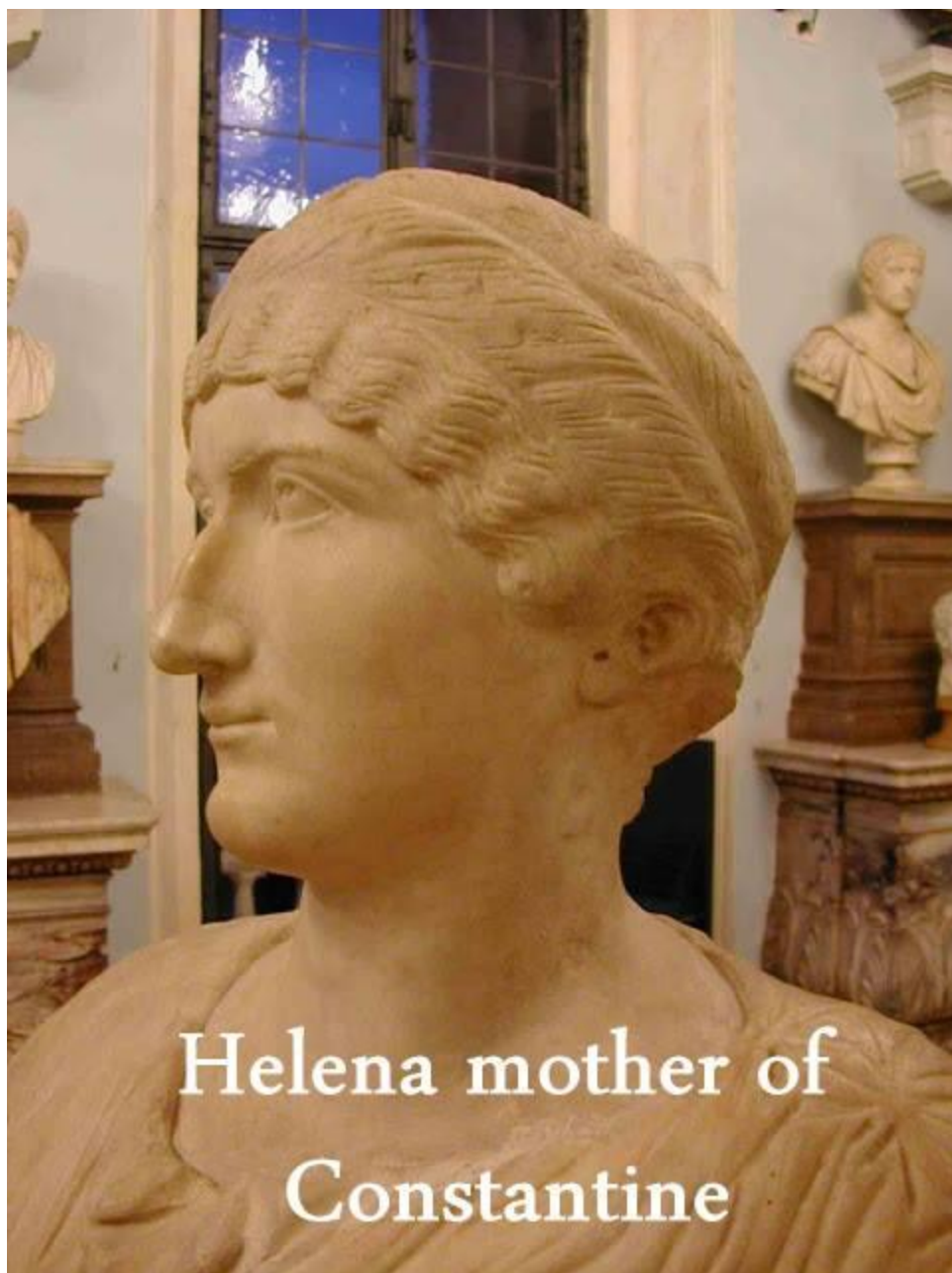
Saint Helena or Saint Helen (Latin: Flavia Iulia Helena Augusta; c. 250 – c. 330) was the consort of the Roman emperor Constantius Chlorus and the mother of the emperor Constantine the Great, an important figure in the history of Christianity and the world due to her influence on her son Constantine the Great and her own contributions in placing Christianity at the heart of Western Civilisation . She is traditionally credited with a pilgrimage to Syria Palaestina, during which she is claimed to have discovered the True Cross of Jesus's crucifixion.

She is revered as a saint by the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, the Roman Catholic, and the Anglican as well as commemorated by the Lutheran Church.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helena_\(empress\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helena_(empress))



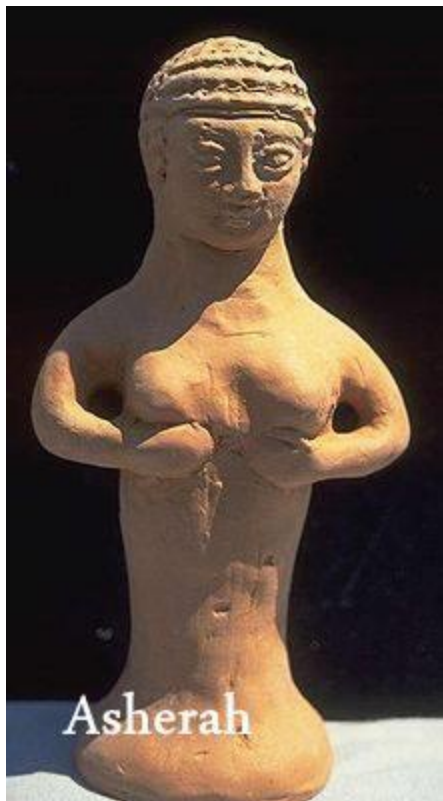




Helena mother of
Constantine



Helena mother of Constantine Coin



Asherah

Religious Emblems

Available Emblems of Belief for Placement on Government Headstones and Markers

<http://www.cem.va.gov/docs/factsheets/hmm.pdf>



NEW TOPICS (SRSR's to do list...)

Reincarnation - Are there any Biblical references? Some people believe that Jesus identified John the Baptist as the reincarnation of Elijah in Matt. 11:13-14 and Matt. 17:10-13.

Reincarnation is believed to occur when the soul or spirit, after the death of the body, comes back to life in a new form, such as another animal or anything that is living. However, once born sometime things from a person's previous life are forgotten. This doctrine is a central tenet within the majority of Indian religious traditions, such as Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism; the Buddhist concept of rebirth is also often referred to as reincarnation.[1] The idea was also fundamental to some Greek philosophers and religions as well as other religions, such as Druidism, and later on, Spiritism, and Eckankar. It is also found in many small-scale societies around the world, in places such as Siberia, West Africa, North America, and Australia.[2]

Although the majority of sects within Judaism, Christianity and Islam do not believe that individuals reincarnate, particular groups within these religions do refer to reincarnation; these groups include the mainstream historical and contemporary followers of Kabbalah, the Cathars, the Alawi, the Druze[3] and the Rosicrucians.[4]

Near Death Experiences - These often seem similar regardless of what religion people are or where they're from. People who've had them often say they no longer fear death, but appreciate life more too. To me this is an interesting and hopeful finding... but still inconclusive. These may offer

evidence about the soul, in the form of out of body experiences that have been reported. Journal of Near-Death Studies ... Dr. Peter Fenwick and Dr. Sam Parnia, of Southampton General Hospital, in England "Parnia and his colleague, Dr Peter Fenwick, a consultant

neurophysiologist at the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford, reason that if the patient really is having an out-of-body experience, this should be testable. First, a person floating above their body should be able to describe events that they can see while they are clinically dead that can be corroborated later. Secondly, the patient has a unique view of the hospital bed and could see objects that other people cannot.

Parnia has placed cards on the top of wardrobes, or hanging from the ceiling, in cardiac wards - a pink dog, for instance. 'These are not things the patient or the staff would associate with a hospital; they cannot see them and they do not know they are there,' he says... If we have someone who leaves their body, is able to identify the card we have left and report about events that happened in the resuscitation theatre which they could not have known about, then we would have to ask some serious questions about the science of consciousness,'

Fenwick says." <http://answers.google.com/answers/main...>

Christmas - its origins and is December 25th really the birthday of Jesus and does it matter?

Prehistoric Man

"Gen 6:4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." Increasingly the word "giants" in this scripture is being translated as "Nephilim", so who or what were the Nephilim? That word is sometimes interpreted as fallen ones which some construe to mean a fallen race of people such as Neanderthals, while others think it means people who fell to earth such as aliens... hmmm, does this mean the plot thickens or not - you decide?

Some "reported" information about Neanderthals:

Neanderthals evolved to survive in the ice age climate of Europe.

Neanderthal brains were generally at least as large as modern human brains.

Neanderthals larynxes were situated higher in the throat than modern humans' perhaps making it difficult for them to speak well.

Neanderthals DNA was almost 99% the same as ours.

Neanderthals and humans probably split from each other on the evolutionary tree about 350,000 years ago.

Our common ancestors may have been Heidelberg man and Rhodesia Man, which may have been a single species. Heidelberg man may have left Africa hundreds of thousands of years ago for the middle east and Europe eventually evolving into Neanderthals, while Rhodesia man stayed in Africa and may have been the descendent of the Cro Magnons.

90,000 years ago, Cro Magnons and Neanderthals may have met in Palestine and Neanderthals are believed to have prevailed. Tens of thousands of years later they met again in the middle east and Europe and this time Cro Magnon's prevailed.

Göbekli Tepe is the oldest human-made place of worship yet discovered, its in Turkey and has been dated back 12,000 years (by some scientists.) The monoliths are decorated with carved reliefs of animals and of abstract pictograms. The pictograms may represent commonly understood sacred symbols, as known from Neolithic cave paintings elsewhere.

This very ancient place is evidence once again that we are a species with amnesia.

The houses or temples are round megalithic buildings. The walls are made of unworked dry stone and include numerous T-shaped monolithic pillars of limestone.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Göbekli_Tepe

Prophecies of Fatimah

Buddhism

Hinduism

Islam

Rastafarians

Scientology

Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God

Akhenaton

UFOs, USOs and ancient Aliens... "We are a species with Amnesia"... Graham Hancock

Did they come? If so, who were they, what did they want, what did they do and will the return?
When the Bible refers to conflicts between powers and principalities is there a connection to aliens?

Could aliens have anything to do with miracles described in the Bible ranging from Shadrach et al surviving the burning furnace, manna from heaven and Jesus' reported; virgin birth, miracles, resurrection and ascension into heaven?

At Balbek in the Bekka Valley of Lebanon, there is a temple mount with stones estimated to weigh 1,000 tons that have been set on top of other stones... ancient astronaut believers say this may have been a landing pad for alien space craft. They point to Sumerians inscriptions in the Epic of Gilgamesh that say he visited such a landing or launch site...

How were 185,000 Assyrian's killed when they were preparing to attack Jerusalem when Hezekiah was king? Did aliens smite them, was it rats, disease, did it actually happen as told in the Bible, is the number 185,000 correct? Were the Hebrews chosen by God or ancient aliens to be the dominant people on earth, and/or could it be by natural selection they have achieved so much? Check out the book of Enoch and the apocryphal book of Enoch where he may have said he met aliens?

The Holy Grail... what is or was it? What are the legends, what if any are the facts, what about the "White Castle" legend, the Da Vinci code etc.

The two creation accounts

The Flood... Epic of Gilgamesh... Planet ice - some scientists believe that 700 million years ago Earth was completely covered with ice, including the oceans being under a mile of it. If they're right, then why couldn't there have also been a world wide flood? Neither claim is taken very seriously by most scientists.

Evolution

Creationism

Canaanites...were some of the Israelites Canaanites, were others refugees from Egyptian bondage, were they all descended from Abraham who came from Ur of the Chaldeans? (aka the ancient city of Sumer, in Southern Mesopotamia)

Bible code

Prayer

Miracles

Pagan Religions and Wicca

Anunnaki, were Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian and Babylonian deities and the word is translated by some as; "those of royal blood, "royal offspring" or by ancient astronaut proponents as "those who came from above."

Mayflower Foundation

Universal or cosmic consciousness... The Institute of Noetic Sciences™, (Petaluma, CA) founded in 1973 by Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research, education, and

membership organization whose mission is supporting individual and collective transformation through consciousness research, educational outreach, and engaging a global learning community in the realization of our human potential. “Noetic” comes from the Greek word nous, which means “intuitive mind” or “inner knowing.” IONS™ conducts, sponsors, and collaborates on leading-edge research into the potentials and powers of consciousness, exploring phenomena that do not necessarily fit conventional scientific models while maintaining a commitment to scientific rigor.www.noetic.org

Historicity of Jesus How much of what is written about Jesus of Nazareth is historically reliable. (This link leads to an article in Wikipedia on the subject and is obviously a controversial starting point.)

Tongues Christian and non-Christian... Other religious groups been observed to practice some form of theopneustic glossolalia. It is perhaps most commonly in Paganism, Shamanism, and other mediumistic religious practices.[63] In Japan, the God Light Association used to practice glossolalia to cause adherents to recall past lives.[64]

Glossolalia has even been postulated as an explanation for the Voynich manuscript.[65]

There are some[who?] who consider the following in Judaism to be some form of glossolalia:

Various rituals and references exist about prayer of people not familiar with the holy language, and the importance of prayers said by people who only know how to mumble the words without understanding them. In the 17th century it was said in the name of the Baal Shem Tov upon hearing the prayer of someone who instead of praising God who blesses the years (HaShanim) praised God who blesses the women (HaNashim). He said that this person's prayers are the highest and holiest. The texts to be recited during the Shavuot celebrations (original ceremony of Pentecost) must be read in the original Hebrew directly from the Bible, even if the person reading it does not understand the meaning.[66]

Certain Gnostic magical texts from the Roman period have written on them unintelligible syllables such as "t t t t n n n d d d d..." etc. It is conjectured that these may be transliterations of the sorts of sounds made during glossolalia. The Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians also features a hymn of (mostly) unintelligible syllables which is thought to be an early example of Christian glossolalia.[citation needed]

In the 19th century, Spiritism was developed by the work of Allan Kardec, and the phenomenon was seen as one of the self-evident manifestations of spirits. Spiritists argued that some cases were actually cases of xenoglossia (from Greek, *xenos*, stranger; and *glossa*, language. When one speaks in a language unknown to him).

Glossolalia has also been observed in the Voodoo religion of Haiti,[67] as well as in the Hindu Gurus and Fakirs of India.[68][69] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tongues#Non-Christian_practice



Holy Relics

The Shroud of Turin The Shroud of Turin or Turin Shroud (Italian: Sindone di Torino) is a length of linen cloth bearing the image of a man who appears to have suffered physical trauma in a

manner consistent with crucifixion. There is no consensus yet on how the image was created. It is believed by some to be the burial shroud of Jesus of Nazareth, despite radiocarbon dating tests dating it to the Medieval period. The image is much clearer in black-and-white negative than in its natural sepia color. The negative image was first observed in 1898 on the reverse photographic plate of amateur photographer Secondo Pia, who was allowed to photograph it while it was being exhibited in the Turin Cathedral. The shroud is kept in the royal chapel of the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Turin, northern Italy.

The origins of the shroud and its image are the subject of intense debate among theologians, historians and researchers. Scientific and popular publications have presented diverse arguments for both authenticity and possible methods of forgery. A variety of scientific theories regarding the shroud have since been proposed, based on disciplines ranging from chemistry to biology and medical forensics to optical image analysis. The Shroud of Turin is respected by Christians of several traditions, including Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Orthodox, Pentecostals, and Presbyterians.[1] The Catholic Church has neither formally endorsed nor rejected the shroud, but in 1958 Pope Pius XII approved of the image in association with the devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus.[2] More recently, Pope Francis and his predecessor Pope Benedict XVI have both described the Shroud of Turin as “an icon”.[3]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shroud_of_Turin

The Gabriel Stone aka Gabriel's Revelation, also called Hazon Gabriel (the Vision of Gabriel)[1] or the Jeselsohn Stone,[2] is a three-foot-tall (one metre) stone tablet with 87 lines of Hebrew text written in ink, containing a collection of short prophecies written in the first person and dated to the late 1st century BCE.[3][4] One of the stories allegedly tells of a man who was killed by the Romans and resurrected in three days. It is a tablet described as a "Dead Sea scroll in stone".[3][5]

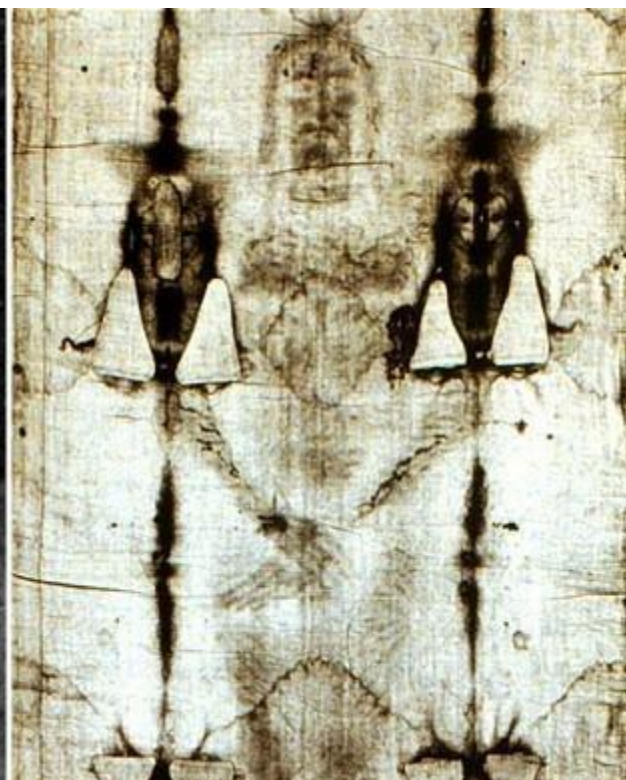
The unprovenanced tablet was likely found near the Dead Sea some time around the year 2000 and has been associated with the same community which created the Dead Sea scrolls. It is relatively rare in its use of ink on stone.[5] It is in the possession of Dr. David Jeselsohn, a Swiss–Israeli collector, who bought it from a Jordanian antiquities dealer. At the time, he was unaware of its significance.[4]

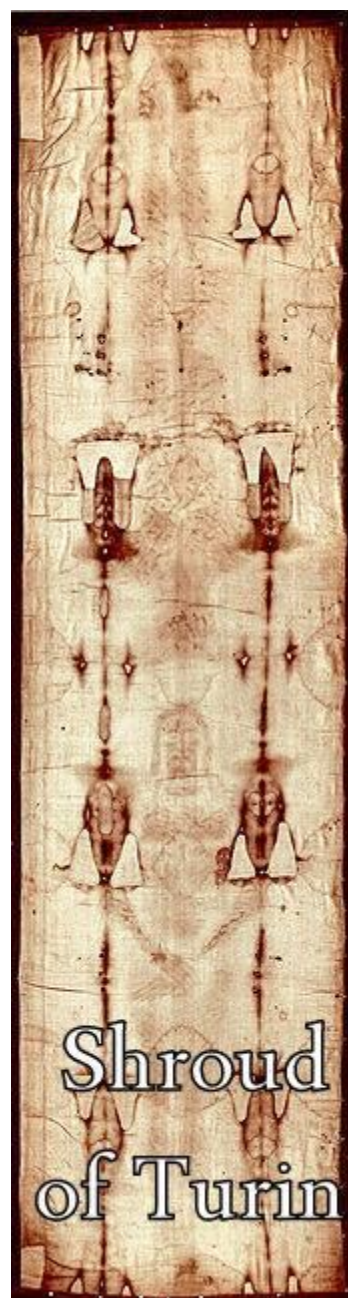
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel's_Revelation

Spear of Destiny aka Holy Lance (German: Heilige Lanze), also known as the Holy Spear, Spear of Destiny, Lance of Longinus, and Spear of Longinus, is the name given to the lance that pierced the side of Jesus as he hung on the cross, according to the Gospel of John. There have been three or four major relics that are claimed to be the Holy Lance or parts of it, (wikipedia.org) including those displayed or kept in; Rome, Italy; Echmiadzin, Armenia; Vienna, Austria; Antioch, Turkey and Krakow, Poland.



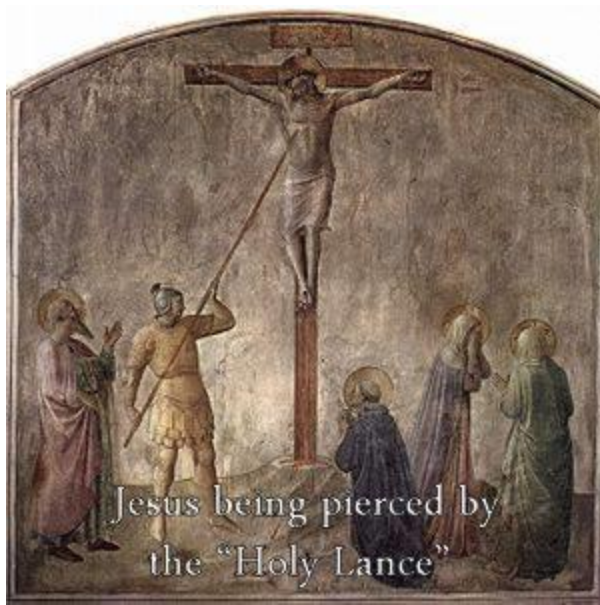
Shroud of Turin



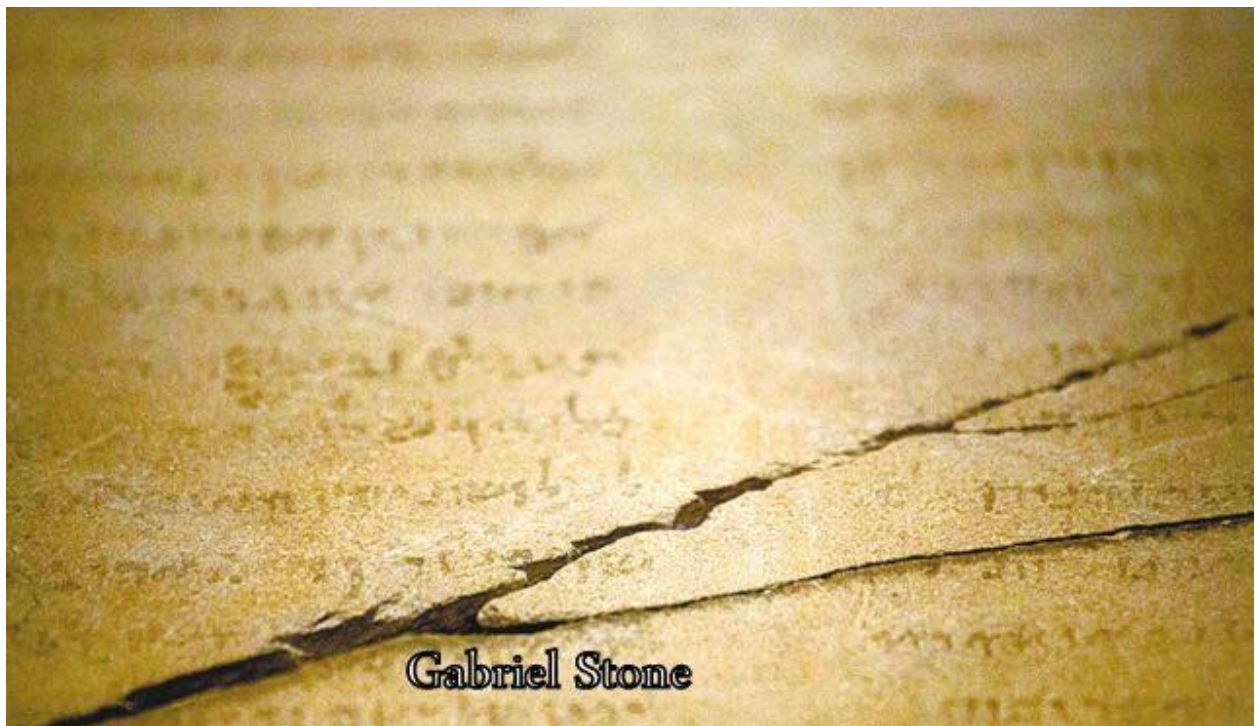


Shroud
of Turin





Jesus being pierced by
the "Holy Lance"



Gabriel Stone

The Bible

The Bible is surely the most read and published book the world has ever known. Zoom in below for the history of the King James Bible.

From Wikipedia,

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke were written independently, each using Mark and a second document called "Q" as a source. Q is conceived as the common material found in Matthew and Luke but not in Mark.

The Q source (also Q document or Q) is a hypothetical written source for the Gospel of Matthew and Gospel of Luke. Q (short for the German Quelle, or "source") is defined as the "common" material found in Matthew and Luke but not in the Gospel of Mark. This ancient text supposedly contained the logia or quotations from Jesus.[1]

Along with Markan priority, Q was hypothesized by 1900, and it is one of the foundations of modern gospel scholarship.[2] B. H. Streeter formulated a widely accepted view of Q: that it was a written document (not an oral tradition) composed in Greek; that almost all of its contents appear in Matthew, in Luke, or in both; and that Luke more often preserves the original order of the text than Matthew. In the two-source hypothesis, Matthew and Luke both used Mark and Q as sources. Some scholars have postulated that Q is actually a plurality of sources, some written and some oral. Others have attempted to determine the stages in which Q was composed.[3]

The existence of Q has sometimes been challenged.[3] The existence of a highly treasured dominical document, being omitted from all the early Church catalogs and going unmentioned by all the fathers of the early Church, remains one of the great conundrums of modern Biblical scholarship.[4] However, other scholars explain this by pointing out that copying Q was unnecessary, since it was embedded in other texts that gained prominence. The editorial board of the International Q Project writes: "During the second century, when the canonizing process was taking place, scribes did not make new copies of Q, since the canonizing process involved choosing what should and what should not be used in the church service. Hence they preferred to make copies of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, where the sayings of Jesus from Q were rephrased to avoid misunderstandings, and to fit their own situations and their understanding of what Jesus had really meant." [5] Despite challenges, the two source hypothesis retains wide support.[3]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Q_source

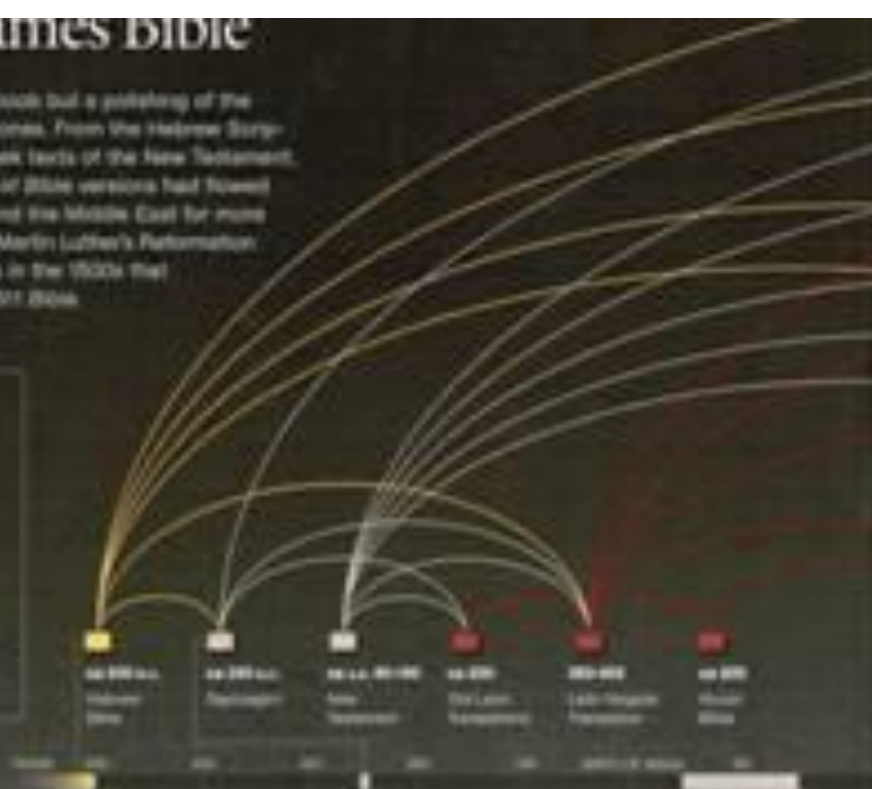
Folio from Papyrus 46, containing 2 Corinthians 11:33-12:9, is one of the oldest extant New Testament manuscripts in Greek, written on papyrus, with its 'most probable date' between 175-225.[1] Some leaves are part of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, and others are in the University of Michigan Papyrus Collection.[2]

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 ΥΠΕΡ ΑΙΡΩΜΕΝ ΕΔΟΘΗΜΕΝ ΣΚΟΛΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΑΡΚΙ

Ancient papyrus New
 Testament fragment

King James Bible

It was not a new book but a polishing of the best of many old ones. From the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek texts of the New Testament, a broiled stream of Bible versions had flowed through Europe and the Middle East for more than 2,000 years. Martin Luther's Reformation began translations in the 1500s that were key to the 1611 Bible.



The Bible Through Time

1000 B.C.

The Scriptures of the Hebrew Bible—the law, the prophets, and other writings—were thought to have been compiled by the time

300 B.C.

A Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, called the Septuagint, is credited to Jewish scholars living in Alexandria, Egypt

80-100 A.D.

Paul's letters to churches throughout Greece and Asia Minor are the earliest Christian writings of the New Testament

400 A.D.

The church's Latin Bible, called the Vulgate, was the first Latin Bible translation and was used in Europe

Bible Timeline

Origins of the Bible in Hebrew and Greek

For centuries, Jewish Scriptures were copied by hand in scrolls of animal skin—leather or parchment. Christian writings that became the New Testament were likely first recorded on scraps of papyrus. By the early second century, A.D., Christian Scriptures were copied on pieces of paper that formed together so that the pages could be turned to new scenes called a scroll, or book.

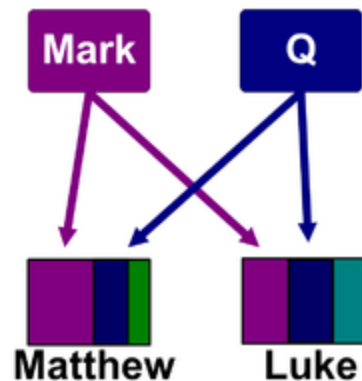


The Dead Sea Scrolls, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, were copies of Hebrew Scriptures made by 100 B.C.

Latin and Early Vernacular Translations

With Rome as head of the Western church, Latin became the chief language of Christian Bibles. The fifth-century Vulgate translation was the standard for a thousand years. It was used by a monk at Lindisfarne monastery around 700 to create the Anglo-Saxon Gospels (right). About 1500, one of the earliest English translations of Scripture was translated within its pages.

Two-source Hypothesis



Gnostic Gospels

Believed to have been written between AD 200 and 400, the Gnostic Gospels focus on the sayings and teachings of Jesus. There are numerous writings that are sometimes included in the list of Gnostic Gospels, but the most prominent include:

Gospel of Peter (recovered in 1886 in Egypt, in the grave of a monk who had died in the 700's AD, he was reportedly still clutching the gospel in his hands.)

Gospel of Mary (recovered in 1896)

Gospel of Thomas versions were found in Oxyrhynchus, Egypt in 1898, and again in the Nag Hammadi Library, some scholars think it is older than the canonized gospels. It includes sayings of Jesus but no narrative.

"The Kingdom of God is inside/within you (and all about you), not in buildings/mansions of wood and stone. (When I am gone) Split a piece of wood and I am there, lift the/a stone and you will find me."

(113) His disciples said to him, "When will the kingdom come?" Jesus said, "It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying 'here it is' or 'there it is.' Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it."

(114) Simon Peter said to him, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life." Jesus said, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit"

resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."

Gospel of Truth (discovered in 1945 as part of the Nag Hammadi Library)

Gospel of Philip (Nag Hammadi Library)

Gospel of Judas (recovered via the antiquities black market in 1983, and then reconstructed in 2006)

Gospel of Mary (Apparently discovered in the late 1800s near Akhmim in upper Egypt then it was purchased by a German scholar, Dr. Carl Reinhart, in Cairo and taken to Berlin and is now part of the Berlin Gnostic Godex.

The Gnostic Gospels are not included in the Biblical canon of the major Christian churches and are instead part of what is known as the New Testament apocrypha.

In 325 AD, the emperor Constantine in conjunction with the bishops at the council of Nicea accepted the Gospels of; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as the only true gospels. In 382 AD the emperor Theodosius banned all gospels that had not been canonized. Christians were not permitted to read them and they were allegedly gathered up and destroyed as much as possible.

In 180 AD Bishop Irenaeus of Lugdunum (now called Lyon, France) published Adversus Haereses which means "Against Heresies." In it he listed various books that he considered heretical including the gospel of Thomas. Irenaeus later was made a saint by the eastern orthodox church.





The "Canon"

The Bible Canon refers to the officially accepted books in the Bible, which Christians consider divinely inspired at the very least. The word "canon" may have originated from the Hebrew word קנה "kaneh" which is similar to the the Greek word κανών "kanon" meaning; "reed", "cane", "rule" or "measure".

The Bible Canon actually varies slightly between the major churches of Christendom, resulting in; Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox churches not having the exact same books in their Bibles.

File:P46.jpg

A portion of Papyrus 46, one of the oldest existing New Testament manuscripts. It was reportedly written in Greek between 175-225 and contains most of the epistles of Paul. The exact origin of the papyrus is unknown, but it is believed to have been found in a ruined Christian church or monastery in Cairo, Egypt. It was offered for sale by an antiquities dealer and parts of it were purchased by Chester Beatty and then by the University of Michigan between 1930 and 1935.

In 325 AD the Roman emperor Constantine brought leaders of the various Christian churches of the ancient world together to decide which books should be included in an official Catholic or universal church book. Some scholars say he would not let them leave until they agreed on a canon... some say he was instrumental in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John being selected.

According to some sources, in 382 AD the emperor Theodosius banned all the gospels except Matthew, Mark, Luke and John... other sources say it was not an outright ban.

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Ancient papyrus New
 Testament fragment

✗ = the book is not included in that Bible

✓ = the book is included in that Bible

	Christian's Bible	Roman Catholic Bible	Greek Orthodox Bible
1 Esdras	✗	✗	✓
Tobit	✗	✓	✓
Judith	✗	✓	✓
Additions to Esther	✗	✓	✓
Wisdom of Solomon	✗	✓	✓
Ecclesiasticus	✗	✓	✓
Baruch	✗	✓	✓
Epistle of Jeremiah	✗	✓	✓
Song of the Three Children	✗	✓	✓
Story of Susanna	✗	✓	✓
Bel and the Dragon	✗	✓	✓
Prayer of Manasseh	✗	✓	✓
1 Maccabees	✗	✓	✓
2 Maccabees	✗	✓	✓
3 Maccabees	✗	✗	✓
4 Maccabees	✗	✗	✓
Psalms 151	✗	✗	✓

By Steve Rudd <http://www.bible.ca/b-canon-orthodox-catholic-christian-bible-books.htm>

Apocryphal Writings

To many church leaders, the apocryphal writings are; false, spurious, bad, or heretical. To a smaller number of church leaders the apocryphal writings instead means "hidden" or "concealed."

To some extent whether or not they are valuable or heretical may depend on if one is strictly fundamentalist or not. To academics these writings are not so reviled and considered by some to offer insights and perhaps a few facts worthy of consideration. Not surprisingly, writings considered apocryphal by one sect may be considered legitimate by another and writings considered of some value by some Jewish thinkers may be lambasted by some Christian thinkers and vice versa. In a few cases, writings considered apocryphal by one sect are even considered part of the canon by another.

There may be over 600 Apocryphal Books according to this source:
<http://www.toddtyszka.com/fulllist.html>

Here are the titles of some of the best known Apocryphal Books of the Old Testament:

The Old Testament Apocrypha include either fourteen or fifteen books, depending on the method of counting, which were written in the period of 200 B.C. to 100 A.D. The most convenient and readable edition of the apocryphal has been put out by Thomas Nelson and Sons in a special edition of the Revised Standard Version (1957). The titles and order of books in this edition are as follows:

1. The First Book of Esdras (also known as Third Esdras)
2. The Second Book of Esdras (also known as Fourth Esdras)
3. Tobit
4. Judith
5. The Additions to the Book of Esther
6. The Wisdom of Solomon
7. Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach
8. Baruch
9. The Letter of Jeremiah (This letter is sometimes incorporated as the last chapter of Baruch. When this is done the number of books is fourteen instead of fifteen.)
10. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men
11. Susanna
12. Bel and the Dragon
13. The Prayer of Manasseh
14. The First Book of Maccabees
15. The Second Book of Maccabees

Here's a more detailed list:

Apocryphal Infancy of Jesus Gospels:
Infancy Gospel of James (aka "Protoevangelium of James")
Infancy Gospel of Thomas
Syriac Infancy Gospel
History of Joseph the Carpenter
Life of John the Baptist
Apocryphal Jewish Christian Gospels:(surviving primarily as quotes)
Gospel of the Hebrews
Gospel of the Nazarenes
Gospel of the Ebionites
Apocryphal Rival versions of canonical Gospels
Gospel of Marcion

Gospel of Mani
Gospel of Apelles
Gospel of Bardesanes
Gospel of Basilides
Gospel of Cerinthus
Apocryphal "Sayings" Gospels (Supposed sayings and parables of Jesus)
Gospel of Thomas
Apocryphal Passion Gospels (arrest, execution and resurrection of Jesus)
Gospel of Peter
Gospel of Nicodemus (also called the "Acts of Pilate")
Gospel of Bartholomew
Questions of Bartholomew
Resurrection of Jesus Christ (claims to be according to Bartholomew)
Apocryphal Harmonic Gospels (aimed at harmonizing the canonized gospels)
Diatessaron (and variations thereof)
Apocryphal Dialogues with Jesus
Apocryphon of James (also called the "Secret Book of James")
Book of Thomas the Contender
Dialogue of the Saviour
Gospel of Judas (also called the "Gospel of Judas Iscariot")
Gospel of Mary (also called the "Gospel of Mary Magdalene")
Gospel of Philip
Greek Gospel of the Egyptians (distinct from the Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians)
The Sophia of Jesus Christ
Apocryphal texts concerning Jesus
Gospel of Truth
Gnostic Apocalypse of Peter (distinct from the Apocalypse of Peter)
Pistis Sophia
Second Treatise of the Great Seth
Apocryphal Sethian (a gnostic group) writings concerning Jesus:
The Sethians were a gnostic group who originally worshipped the biblical Seth as a messianic figure, later treating Jesus as a re-incarnation of Seth. They produced numerous texts expounding their esoteric cosmology, usually in the form of visions:
Apocryphon of John (also called the "Secret Gospel of John")
Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians (distinct from the Greek Gospel of the Egyptians)
Coptic Apocalypse of Paul (distinct from the Apocalypse of Paul)
Trimorphic Protennoia
Apocryphal writings concerned with Rituals
Ophite Diagrams
Books of Jeu
Apocryphal "Acts" (concerned with the lives of the apostles)
Acts of Andrew
Acts of Barnabas
Acts of John
Acts of the Martyrs
Acts of Paul
Acts of Paul and Thecla
Acts of Peter
Acts of Peter and Andrew
Acts of Peter and Paul
Acts of Peter and the Twelve

Acts of Philip
Acts of Pilate
Acts of Thomas
Acts of Xanthippe, Polyxena, and Rebecca
Apocryphal Epistles (Letters):
Epistle of Barnabas
Epistles of Clement
Epistle of the Corinthians to Paul
Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans
Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians
Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians
Epistle to Diognetus
Epistle to the Laodiceans (an epistle in the name of Paul)
Epistle to Seneca the Younger (an epistle in the name of Paul)
Third Epistle to the Corinthians - accepted in the past by some in the Armenian Orthodox church.
Apocalyptic Apocryphal writings:
Apocalypse of Paul (distinct from the Coptic Apocalypse of Paul)
Apocalypse of Peter (distinct from the Gnostic Apocalypse of Peter)
Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius
Apocalypse of Thomas (also called the Revelation of Thomas)
Apocalypse of Stephen (also called the Revelation of Stephen)
First Apocalypse of James (also called the First Revelation of James)
Second Apocalypse of James (also called the Second Revelation of James)
The Shepherd of Hermas
Apocryphal writings related to the fate of Mary:
The Home Going of Mary
The Falling asleep of the Mother of God
The Descent of Mary
Miscellaneous Apocryphal writings:
These texts, due to their content or form, do not fit into the other categories:
Apostolic Constitutions (church regulations supposedly asserted by the apostles)
Book of Nepos
Canons of the Apostles
Cave of Treasures (also called The Treasure)
Clementine literature
Didache (possibly the first written catechism)
Liturgy of St James
Penitence of Origen
Prayer of Paul
Sentences of Sextus
Physiologus
Fragmentary apocryphal works (fragments of these texts reportedly exists)
The Unknown Berlin Gospel (also called the Gospel of the Saviour)
The Naassene Fragment
The Fayyum Fragment
The Secret Gospel of Mark
The Oxyrhynchus Gospels
The Egerton Gospel
Lost works (Texts mentioned in many ancient sources but without known surviving copies)

Gospel of Eve (a quotation from this gospel is given by Epiphanius (Haer. xxvi. 2, 3). It is possible that this is the Gospel of Perfection he alludes to in xxvi. 2. The quotation shows that this gospel was the expression of complete pantheism)

Gospel of the Four Heavenly Realms

Gospel of Matthias (probably different from the Gospel of Matthew)

Gospel of Perfection (used by the followers of Basilides and other Gnostics. See Epiphanius, Haer. xxvi. 2)

Gospel of the Seventy

Gospel of Thaddaeus (may be a synonym for the Gospel of Judas

Gospel of the Twelve

Memoria Apostolorum

1 and 2 Clement

Shepherd of Hermas

Didache

Apocalypse of Peter

The Protevangelium of James

Third Epistle to the Corinthians

This table shows which Apocryphal books are standard or not to; Protestant Christians, Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox Christians.

✗ = the book is not included in that Bible

✓ = the book is included in that Bible

	Christian's Bible	Roman Catholic Bible	Greek Orthodox Bible
1 Esdras	✗	✗	✓
Tobit	✗	✓	✓
Judith	✗	✓	✓
Additions to Esther	✗	✓	✓
Wisdom of Solomon	✗	✓	✓
Ecclesiasticus	✗	✓	✓
Baruch	✗	✓	✓
Epistle of Jeremiah	✗	✓	✓
Song of the Three Children	✗	✓	✓
Story of Susanna	✗	✓	✓
Bel and the Dragon	✗	✓	✓
Prayer of Manasseh	✗	✓	✓
1 Maccabees	✗	✓	✓
2 Maccabees	✗	✓	✓
3 Maccabees	✗	✗	✓
4 Maccabees	✗	✗	✓
Psalms 151	✗	✗	✓

By Steve Rudd <http://www.bible.ca/b-canon-orthodox-catholic-christian-bible-books.htm>

Was Jesus Married?

BOSTON – A Harvard University professor on Tuesday unveiled a fourth-century fragment of papyrus she said is the only existing ancient text quoting Jesus explicitly referring to having a wife.

Karen King, an expert in the history of Christianity, said the text contains a dialogue in which Jesus refers to "my wife," whom he identifies as Mary. King says the fragment of Coptic script is a copy of a gospel, probably written in Greek in the second century.

King helped translate and unveiled the tiny fragment at a conference of Coptic experts in Rome. She said it doesn't prove Jesus was married but speaks to issues of family and marriage that faced Christians.

SUMMARY

Four words in a tiny fragment of parchment suggest early Christians believed Jesus had been married

Written in a language of ancient Egyptian Christians, they translate to "Jesus said to them, my wife."

Document presented at a six-day conference in Rome.

Biblical scholars urge caution, due to unclear origins of parchment.

Four words in the 1.5-by-3-inch (3.8-by-7.6-centimeter) fragment provide the first evidence that some early Christians believed Jesus had been married, King said. Those words, written in a language of ancient Egyptian Christians, translate to "Jesus said to them, my wife," King said in a statement.

King said that in the dialogue the disciples discuss whether Mary is worthy and Jesus says "she can be my disciple."

Christian tradition has long held that Jesus was unmarried even though there was no reliable historical evidence to support that, King said. The new gospel, she said, "tells us that the whole question only came up as part of vociferous debates about sexuality and marriage."

"From the very beginning, Christians disagreed about whether it was better not to marry," she said, "but it was over a century after Jesus's death before they began appealing to Jesus's marital status to support their positions."

King presented the document at a six-day conference being held at Rome's La Sapienza University and at the Augustinianum institute of the Pontifical Lateran University. While the Vatican newspaper and Vatican Radio frequently cover such academic conferences, there was no mention of King's discovery in any Vatican media on Tuesday. That said, her paper was one of nearly 60 delivered Tuesday at the vast conference, which drew 300 academics from around the globe.

The fragment belongs to an anonymous private collector who contacted King to help translate and analyze it. Nothing is known about the circumstances of its discovery, but it had to have come from Egypt, where the dry climate allows ancient writings to survive and because it was written in a script used in ancient times there, King said.

'[It uses] the language of intimacy to talk about spiritual relationships.'

- Bible scholar Ben Witherington III

The unclear origins of the document should encourage people to be cautious, said Bible scholar Ben Witherington III, a professor and author who teaches at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. He said the document follows the pattern of Gnostic texts of the second, third and fourth centuries, using "the language of intimacy to talk about spiritual relationships."

"What we hear from the Gnostic is this practice called the sister-wife texts, where they carried around a female believer with them who cooks for them and cleans for them and does the usual domestic chores, but they have no sexual relationship whatsoever" during the strong monastic periods of the third and fourth centuries, Witherington said. "In other words, this is no confirmation of the Da Vinci Code or even of the idea that the Gnostics thought Jesus was married in the normal sense of the word."

These kinds of doubts, King said, should not stop scholars from continuing to examine the document.

Those who conducted initial examination of the fragment include Roger Bagnall, a papyrologist who's the director of the New York-based Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, and AnneMarie Luijendijk, a scholar of the New Testament and early Christianity from Princeton University. They said their study of the papyrus, the handwriting and how the ink was chemically absorbed shows it is highly probable it's an ancient text, King said.

Another scholar, Ariel Shisha-Halevy, professor of linguistics at Hebrew University and a leading expert on Coptic language, reviewed the text's language and concluded it offered no evidence of forgery.

King and Luijendijk said they believe the fragment is part of a newly discovered gospel they named "Gospel of Jesus's Wife" for reference purposes. King said she dated the time it was written to the second half of the second century because it shows close connections to other newly discovered gospels written at that time, especially the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of Philip.

<http://www.foxnews.com/.../harvard-scholar-discovery-suggest>



<http://www.truthbeknown.com/mithra.htm>

Jesus as a reincarnation of Mithra

www.near-death.com/experiences/origen048.html

The Orthodox Christian hierarchy is nearly identical to the Mithraic version. ... of his many festivals was his birthday, celebrated on the 25th of December, the day ...

The Roman Empire

webpace.ship.edu/cgboer/romanempire.html

Mithra's birthday was celebrated December 25 and he was called "the light of the world." After teaching for 36 years, he ascended into heaven in 208 bc.

Subject: Mithras 22/25 birthday was used for Christmas and Christ's birthday?

Decreed by pope Julius in 4th? century. Luke implies a springtime birth.

Étienne Drioton - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Étienne_Drioton

Cairo antiquities dealer Phocion Jean Tano had acquired most of the collection from these outlaws, but had already sold one codex to Maria Dattari, a private ...

Tacitus Nero – Fire, blame & persecution of the Christians